

WASHINGTON, DC-Congressman Peter DeFazio (D-Springfield) today offered an amendment to prohibit the use of federal funds to implement the Administration's cross-border pilot program to allow Mexican-domiciled trucks into the U.S. The amendment was offered to the 2008 Transportation-HUD Appropriations Act and was approved by a voice vote.

"Mexican trucks pose a serious threat to the safety of our highways and the security of our country," DeFazio said. "This Administration is hell-bent on opening up our borders but they have failed to require that Mexican drivers and trucks meet the same safety and security standards as US drivers and trucks. That's simply unacceptable. This amendment will move us away from the Administration's current faith-based program to one based on the rule of law and regulation."

Earlier this year, Secretary of Transportation Peters announced the Administration's intent to implement a one-year pilot program to allow up to 100 trucking companies from Mexico full access to U.S. highways. The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) made clear that at the conclusion of the one-year pilot program, the US-Mexico border would be permanently open to Mexican trucks without any analysis of the impacts of the program.

In May, the House voted overwhelmingly, 411-3, to pass H.R. 1773, the Safe American Roads Act of 2007, legislation which would extend the pilot program to three years and ensure that DOT establishes a process to analyze the impact of allowing Mexican trucks on our nation's roadways, before the border is completely opened. Provisions were also included in the FY 2007 Iraq War Supplemental spending bill to impose strict measures to ensure that the pilot program adheres to safety and security guidelines and that its progress is assessed by an independent panel.

Federal law states that the Administration cannot jeopardize or degrade the safety of the American public by circumventing truck safety standards or congressional oversight in implementing this pilot program.

Congress enacted these provisions after growing frustration with the Administration's clear desire to open the border at any cost, without regard for the safety of the traveling public.

DeFazio's amendment is intended to slow down the process to ensure that the DOT places a priority on ensuring the safety and security of our nation's roadways before they give Mexican trucks unfettered access to our highways. The pilot program does not ensure that Mexican trucking companies meet U.S. safety standards such as regulating hours of service, vehicle safety, driver training and licensing, and drug testing. Mexican drivers are often forced to drive up to 72 hours at a time and freely admit that they have to take drugs in order to do it.